

Blue Ribbon Commission Brief Remarks

Lake Barrett

March 25, 2010

Good morning Chairman Hamilton, Chairman Scowcroft and members of the Commission. My name is Lake Barrett and I am speaking as a public citizen before you today. My real job is being the volunteer president for my church preschool with 150 2 to 4 year olds. However I am also a nuclear engineer and at the end of my main working career I basically ran the DOE OCRWM Yucca Mountain office for 10 years during the entire Clinton Administration and Bush Administration until the 2002 Nuclear Waste Policy Act Yucca Mountain decision was lawfully made and when I retired.

In the beginning, as a young engineer, I worked on a nuclear refueling of the USN Nautilus, and I firmly believe that that nuclear waste, which still sits in Idaho, needs to be safely disposed of in my life time and not just left there for my grandchildren to figure out how to dispose of it. Our generation made it and we should safely dispose of it. It is immoral for our country to just put spent nuclear fuel and High Level Waste in temporary engineered storage and give the disposal problem to our grandchildren just because it is politically hard for us to do. We ethically should not just kick the trash down the road for them to have to do. It is just plain wrong for so many reasons.

I remind the Commission that 50 years ago, AEC officials said that Hanford tank storage was fine and safe for 50 years or more. Technologies would take care of it and there was no need for disposal preparation. Little did they know. But those words are no different than some that you hear today from very important people who talk about just storing spent fuel and nuclear wastes at existing nuclear sites for hundreds of years or more into the future.

In my limited time I recommend that you focus on developing an alternative nuclear waste Plan B that the nation can rationally compare against the Plan A Yucca Mountain. Yucca Mountain, like it or not and as imperfect as it may be, is the lawfully designated repository after 30 years and 10 Billion dollars of hard scientific and political work. Yucca licensing should be allowed to continue to help inform you if the current regulatory process works or not. That information is important for any repository site of the future. Valuable geologic disposal expertise should not be thrown away just for short term political expediency.

Within what little time I have, I recommend you develop an integrated three element Plan B program where the most important element is the creation of a durable process that delivers a real geologic disposal facility within an ethical time period. My view of an ethical time period for operation is within the next 25 years which is nearly 100 years after the first HLW was created, which still sits un-disposed at Hanford. Do not lose sight that disposal is the critical central issue and key goal for you.

The second and least important element is advanced nuclear technologies. As the Secretary said they can reduce wastes and do many wonderful things, but they do not dispose of all the wastes. Some may try to trick you into thinking that nuclear waste can be completely recycled.

It cannot. Advanced nuclear concepts should proceed only on their net merits. One with good long term promise is advanced reactors that can burn LWR fuel without chemical separations. But even these promising future concepts do not eliminate the need for disposal and do nothing for existing and future HLW.

If Yucca is not to be used, then a new repository is many decades away from operation. As mentioned yesterday there are 10 permanently shutdown reactor sites that have stranded spent fuel on our lakes, rivers and seacoasts, where all agree it should not indefinitely be stored. Therefore I believe the second most important element is the creation of one or more regional interim storage facilities to bridge between the present undesirable onsite storage situation and a new geologic disposal facility. These volunteer regional interim storage facilities would initially, in a stepwise learning fashion, consolidate all shutdown reactor fuel and eliminate all nuclear risks at these sites which were never meant to be long term waste storage sites.

The federal government should provide incentive performance contracts to private industry to site, license, build and operate these "bridging" interim storage facilities. Such facilities would likely be coupled with future advanced nuclear facilities to make them desirable from a state perspective. State partnerships are key to facility siting. Traditional federal government siting is a proven failure, and should be avoided.

On the subject of states, yesterday people mentioned how the Nordic countries have done well on siting their repositories. I remind the Commission that Sweden and Finland do not have states, only local governments. If we had only local and central governments, we would already have operating facilities here, but we are the United STATES of America. Trips to Sweden are fun (in summer), but don't be misled.

There are many good existing reports with lessons learned on how to do these things and I would be happy to brief and help any Commission member or staff with these in the future. I live here in the area and Tim and John have my contact information.

I thank you all for agreeing to serve on this important Commission and I will do anything possible to help toward your success. I do not want to leave this earth without having a safe environmentally protective permanent disposal capability available to my grandchildren for wastes that you and I helped create. Since you are now federal employees on this Commission, I hope you will feel the same way.

Thank you,

Lake